

Southwest Area Mobilization Guide
Chapter 20 - Administrative Procedures
Section 26 • Preparedness Levels

26.1 Overview of the Southwest Area Preparedness Levels

a. **Purpose.** All wildland protection agencies are directed to protect life, property, and the natural resources entrusted to them. These requirements dictate strict attention be paid to the availability and use of suppression resources. To this end, a system has been established to determine the preparedness levels that all wildland fire agencies within the Southwest Area will use. These preparedness levels will provide for presuppression and suppression capabilities suited to fire hazard, risk, and the overall situation complexity.

This plan will serve three primary functions:

1. To coordinate workforce and equipment needs for prescribed fire and wildfire suppression.
2. To insure that prescribed fire use and fire protection responsibilities do not exceed area wildland fire management capabilities and that such use is coordinated with area and national suppression needs.
3. To insure prescribed fire activities do not violate air quality constraints.

Preparedness levels are basically dictated by:

1. Condition of the fuels protected.
2. Resultant burning characteristics.
3. Fire activity, prescribed and wildland, both within and outside the Southwest Area.
4. Resource availability, within and outside the Southwest Area.
5. Air quality considerations.

b. **Definitions.**

1. **5 Day Average Severity Curve.** The Energy Release Component (ERC), derived from representative fire weather stations through the area, are averaged over each 5-day period to obtain an areawide 5-day average severity curve.
2. **Wildland Fire.** Any non-structure fire, other than prescribed fire, that occurs in the wildland. This term encompasses fires previously called both wildfires and prescribed natural fires.
3. **Wildland Fire Use.** The management of naturally ignited wildland fires to accomplish specific predated resource management objectives in predefined geographic areas outlined in FMPs. Wildland Fire Use is not to be confused with "Fire Use."
4. **Fire Use.** The combination of wildland fire use and prescribed fire application to meet resource objectives.
5. **Prescribed Fire.** Any fire ignited by management actions to meet specific objectives. A written, approved prescribed fire plan must exist, and NEPA requirements must be met prior to ignition. This term replaces management ignited prescribed fire (MIPF).

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c. **Fire Preparedness Level Determination Procedures.** The Southwest Coordination Center Director will establish the overall preparedness level for the Southwest Area. The following criteria will be assessed to determine preparedness levels:

1. Current and long range forecasted weather effecting:
 - a. Current and forecasted fire behaviors/potential.
 - b. Current and trend of 5 day average fire severity for the Southwest Area.
 - c. Comparison of current and trend severities to the seasonal Southwest Area Fire Severity Curve.
 - d. Resource commitments to activities (i.e., Projects, Prescribed Fire, Wildfire).
2. Individual agency fire reports.
3. National Preparedness Level.
4. Air quality considerations.
5. Fire suppression resource availability.

d. **Using the Plan.** Each preparedness level requires specific actions, assigned to certain Southwest Area positions. When a planning level has been established, the responsible individuals are to carry out their assignments without further notification.

e. **General Preparedness Level Descriptions.** Five Preparedness Levels are recognized and summarized as follows:

1. **Preparedness Level I.** Optimum conditions for normal prescribed fire operations. Wildfire activity within the Southwest Area is light, and large fires are of short duration. There is little or no commitment of Southwest Area and/or national resources.
2. **Preparedness Level II.** Zone and area resources are adequate to manage all wildfires and prescribed fires. Numerous Class A, B, and C fires are occurring and a potential exists for escapes of larger fires for more than one burning period. Potential exists for frequent mobilization of additional resources from other zones.
3. **Preparedness Level III.** There is a potential for two or more units to experience incidents requiring a major commitment of area/national resources. High potential exists of fires becoming Class D and larger. Zones may be requesting resource priorities from SWCC.
4. **Preparedness Level IV.** Class D and larger fires are common and have the potential to exhaust Southwest Area and national resources. Competition exists for area/national resources.
5. **Preparedness Level V.** Several zones are experiencing major fires, and critical national resources are exhausted. Military resources have been committed within the Southwest Area.

NOTE: National preparedness level requirements may require the area preparedness levels to be raised. (Reference Appendix I)

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26.2 Severity Index and Reporting Procedures

The Southwest Area Predictive Services Group in SWCC will monitor the predetermined considerations daily. When the window for Preparedness Levels I and II are exceeded, the Predictive Services Group Leader will notify the SWCC Center Director, who will evaluate the situation and determine, based on written criteria, the appropriate action. In Preparedness Level III, when the preparedness window is exceeded, the SWCC Center Director will notify the SWCG Chairperson of the situation. Each member of the Southwest Coordinating Group will personally be advised of the pending situation.

Each SWCG member will be responsible to coordinate initiating the restrictions imposed by the preparedness level upon the lands within their jurisdiction.

26.3 Preparedness Level Action Plan

26.3.1 PREPAREDNESS LEVEL I

- a. Fire danger in the area is low or moderate, with no more than two zones being high.
- b. SW Area fire severity 5-day mean average consistently below 30.
- c. Fire activity within the Southwest Area is light, and large fires are of short duration. There is little or no commitment of Southwest Area and/or national resources.
- d. Five to 10-day weather forecast does not predict a sustained significant increase in fire severity (i.e., Red Flag watches and warnings, frontal passages).
- e. National Preparedness Level is I or II. (See Appendix I)

Special Prescribed Fire Direction. Contingency resources for a prescribed fire that are not committed to the project must be identified and confirmed as available with the dispatch office before the fire is ignited. The dispatch center should be included in the list of planned contingency resources. When a prescribed fire is underway, contingency resources must be confirmed by the unit at least daily. It must be understood that “available” does not mean “committed.” Once the fire has been lit, orders for contingency resources will be given the same consideration for priority as any other fire, based on the potential to destroy human life and/or property and resource values.

Responsibility	Action Items
<i>Southwest Fire Coordinating Group</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. Select Type 1 Incident Management Teams.2. As needed, review the State Joint Powers agreements.3. Review SWCC operating plan and delegate authority to the SWCC Center Director to carry them out.4. Review and revise the Board operation plan.
<i>SWCC Center Director</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. Review Southwest Coordination Center operating guide with the SWFMB.

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2. Pre-position National Fire Radio Cache systems at Silver City and Prescott.
3. Pre-position Air Transportable Mobile Unit (ATMU) in Albuquerque.
4. As needed, assist the SWCG in the revision of operating plans under the State Joint Powers agreements.
5. Review operating plans for mobilization centers in the Southwest Area.
6. Review, revise, and develop memorandums of understanding between the Southwest Area and other areas as needed.
7. Followup with zones to assure pre-season agreements are completed, provide assistance where needed.
8. Assure the Southwest Area Operating Plan and Mobilization Guide are complete and updated.
9. Assure flight following practices are followed.
10. Monitor weekly situation reports.
11. Notify NICC, Southwest Area Dispatch Zones, and the SWFMB of any major incidents.
12. Participate in zone fire preparedness staff inspections.
13. Monitor resource availability.

Zone Coordinating Group

1. Select Type 2 Incident Management Teams.
2. As needed, review operating plans under the State Joint Powers agreements.
3. Review zone operating plan; delegate authority to the zone center manager to carry it out.

Zone Center Manager

1. Review Zone Coordination Center Operating Plan with the Zone Interagency Coordinating Group.
2. Assist Zone Interagency Coordinating Group in revision of the operating plan of the State Joint Powers agreements, as needed.
3. As needed, review operating guides for local mobilization centers.

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4. As needed, initiate zone Interagency Hotshot Crew and Southwestern Forest Fire Fighter Crew rotation schedules.
5. Develop and maintain seasonal fire severity charts.
6. Assure pre-season agreements are completed, provide assistance where needed.
7. Assure Zone Operating Plan is complete and updated.
8. Keep SWCC informed daily if prescribed fires are planned or occurring, and all resource commitments to these activities.
9. Notify SWCC and other Southwest zones of major incidents via SWC Mail Group in DMS.
10. Assure flight following practices are adhered to.
11. Prioritize fire suppression actions to optimize suppression effectiveness within the zone by using appropriate strategies.
12. Update weekly situation reports.

26.3.2 PREPAREDNESS LEVEL II

- a. Numerous zones are consistently in high fire danger.
- b. SW Area fire severity 5-day mean average is consistently between 30 and 45. Predictive Service's 10-day FW/FD outlook indicates 4-6 whole or partial Predictive Service Area's at Class 4 or 5 (VH or extreme).
- c. Numerous Class A, B, and C fires are occurring and a potential exists for larger fires of more than one burning period duration. Resources within the zones are adequate. Potential exists for movement of resources between zones to become more frequent.
- d. National Preparedness Levels between I and IV. (See Appendix I)
- e. Five to 10-day weather forecast does not predict a sustained increase in fire severity (i.e., Red Flag watch and warnings, frontal passages, etc.)

Responsibility	Action Items in addition to Level I
<i>Southwest Coordinating Group</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Initiate Type 1 Incident Management Team on-call schedule.2. Coordinate the issuance of press releases that highlight interagency current conditions and a brief outlook.
<i>SWCC Center Director</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. As needed, activate 7-day operation for SWCC.2. Expand SWCC operations to provide proper staffing of the Resource and Intelligence desks to cover 13 to 16 hour coverage.

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3. Activate lead plane agreements.
 4. Initiate submission of daily area situation report.
 5. Compile and distribute resource availability within the Southwest Area, daily or weekly, as necessary.
 6. Contact National Weather Service offices to activate twice-daily Fire Weather Forecasts.
 7. Initiate and maintain Area Severity Chart, SIT300 (overhead & crews), and SIT300 (aviation).
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Zone Coordinating Group

1. Initiate Type 2 Incident Management Team on-call schedule.
 2. Consider activating an intelligence specialist(s) for zone activities.
 3. Coordinate the issuance of press releases that highlight current interagency conditions and a brief outlook.
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Zone Center Manager

1. Activate 7-day operation of the zone as requested by the center director.
 2. Expand zone coordination center operations to provide proper staffing as needed.
 3. Assure management systems provide sufficient support to keep computers and telecommunications fully operational.
 4. Compile and submit zone situation report daily or weekly, as necessary.
 5. Initiate conference calls to members of the Zone Coordinating Group to discuss the situation. Frequency of conference calls and/or meetings to be determined by the Board.
 6. Monitor Area Severity Index with increased attention in an upward trend.
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26.3.3 PREPAREDNESS LEVEL III

- a. Most zones experiencing high or greater fire danger.
- b. SW Area fire severity 5 day mean average is consistently between 46 and 59. Predictive Service's 10-day FW/FD outlook indicates 7-9 whole or partial Predictive Service Area's at Class 4 or 5 (VH or extreme).
- c. High potential exists of fires becoming class D and larger. Incidents are requiring a major commitment of Southwest Area or national resources. Numerous additional resources are being ordered through SWCC; competition exists for resources between zones.
- d. National Preparedness Level from I-IV. (See Appendix I)

Special Prescribed Fire Direction. Units considering prescribed fire activities must be prepared for the event that contingency resources may not be available when requested due to fire activity with the area. Constant communications must be maintained with the dispatch office.

Responsibility	Action Items in addition to Level I & II:
<i>Southwest Coordinating Group</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Consider establishing interagency public information specialist(s) for SWCC on 24-hour basis as needed.2. Initiate requests for severity funds.3. Consider activation of MAC Group.4. Consider funding and use of cooperative fire prevention/ education team(s) (NIMG 22.5.10).
<i>SWCC Center Director</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. As needed, operate SW Area Coordination Center on a 24-hour basis as needed.2. Prioritize fire suppression actions to optimize suppression effectiveness by using appropriate logistical strategies.3. Assure management systems provide sufficient support to keep computers and telecommunications fully operational.4. Monitor the implementation of fire restrictions throughout the Southwest Area.5. Monitor release of incident information through the SWCC.6. Initiate conference calls to members of the SWCG to discuss the current situations. Frequency of conference calls and/or meetings to be determined by the Group.7. Maintain one-half of contract helicopters within the Southwest Area for initial attack.

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8. Attempt four airtankers within the Southwest Area for initial attack.
9. Maintain two hotshot crews per state for new start support.
10. Activate a Fire Behavior Center in SWCC as needed, based upon need and severity.
11. Coordinate teleconference with all zone center managers.

Zone Coordinating Group

1. Initiate request for severity funds.
2. Consider implementation of fire restrictions within the zone.
3. Maintain close coordination of all fire use activities.

Zone Center Manager

1. As needed, operate zone coordination center on a 24-hour basis.
 2. Through Zone Coordinating Group monitor the implementation of fire restrictions.
 3. Prepare daily morning management briefing paper.
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26.3.4 PREPAREDNESS LEVEL IV

- a. Numerous zones are experiencing very high or greater fire danger.
- b. SW Area fire severity 5-day mean average is consistently between 60 and 78. Predictive Service's 10-day FW/FD outlook indicates 10 or more whole or partial Predictive Service Area's at Class 4 or 5 (VH or extreme).
- c. Class D and larger fires are common. The potential exists to exhaust area/national resources.
- d. National Preparedness Levels I-V. (See Appendix I)
- e. Numerous periods of severe air stagnation are occurring in sensitive airsheds.

Responsibility

Action Items in addition to Level I - III

Southwest Coordinating Group

1. Notify NICC and all SW Area zone coordination centers of MAC Group members, telephone numbers.
 2. Prioritize fire suppression actions to optimize suppression effectiveness within the SW Area.
 3. Coordinate with agency heads to suspend ignition of prescribed burns and declaration of wildland fires managed
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	<p>for resource benefits, except those that are of no significance or risk. Coordinate suspension of prescribed fire activities with the Zone Coordinating Groups.</p> <p>4. Geographic Area MAC Group will manage the allocation of all Incident Management teams within the area.</p>
<i>SWCC Center Director</i>	<p>1. Request SWCG activate the MAC when multiagency fire problems exist.</p> <p>2. Notify NICC and all SWA zone coordination centers when MAC Group is operational.</p> <p>3. Pre-position additional initial attack resources in strategic locations.</p> <p>4. Coordinate resource needs with SWCG /MAC.</p> <p>5. Coordinate interagency need for specific area closures.</p>
<i>Zone Coordinating Group</i>	<p>1. Coordinate with agency heads the SWCG direction to suspend or curtail ignition of prescribed fires.</p> <p>2. Determine interagency need for area closures.</p> <p>3. Limit prescribed fires and fire use fires to those certified by the agency administrator to have little chance of requiring suppression resources beyond those committed on the unit. This determination shall be made daily, in writing, and shall become a permanent part of the prescribed fire situation analysis. All new natural ignitions will be classified as wildland fires and appropriate suppression action taken, except when approved by a Southwest Area agency head.</p> <p>4. Coordinate prescribed fire activity suspensions.</p>

26.3.5 PREPAREDNESS LEVEL V.

- a. Multiple Incident Management Teams are committed to incidents within the Southwest Area.
- b. Additional firefighting resources and support are not available, or their arrival is delayed for multiple operational periods.
- c. Burning conditions are severe enough that control efforts are often compromised due to extreme spotting and/or fire behavior.
- d. The military may be tasked for assistance.

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Responsibility	Action Items in addition to Level I - IV
Southwest Coordinating Group	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Add Military Liaison to MAC Group if military is activated. 2. Pre-position Incident Management Teams as needed. 3. Take additional steps to assure that all line officers and Agency administrators are advised of all current and predicted activities. 4. Conduct close monitoring of Southwest Area resources to assure that they are getting appropriate rest and recovery time.
SWCC Center Director	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and staff additional staging areas for IMTs and other resources as needed.

APPENDIX I

1. The following comparison chart will be used to assist the Southwest Area Coordinator in determining the SW Area preparedness levels based upon the national situation.

SOUTHWEST AREA LEVELS

		I	II	III	IV	V
N	I	I	II	III	IV	V
A	II	I	II	III	IV	V
T	III	II/III	II/III	III	IV	V
'	IV	II/IV	II/IV	III/IV	IV	V
L	V	III/IV	III/IV	III/IV	IV/V	V